## YES, NO, IT'S COMPLICATED

# Will the BSP-SP alliance in Uttar Pradesh be successful?

**YES**

**BADRI NARAYAN** is the director of the Govind Ballabh Pant Social Institute

### Both parties successfully transfer votes to each other and have some similarities

I believe that the alliance between the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) will be successful in Uttar Pradesh.

This is not merely an alliance between two parties but between two social bases: the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the Dalits. While it is true that both these parties do not command the support of all OBC and Dalit groups, it is also true that the Yadavs, who form the caste base of the SP, constitute a large chunk of the OBC population and are likely to attract other OBCs and Most Backward Classes (MBCs) through social networking. Similarly, the BSP's influence among the Jatavs, who form the largest Dalit community, is likely to attract a few smaller Dalit groups. Many MBC communities, such as the Nishads and Pals, who voted for the SP in the last election have an easy interaction with the Dalits in their everyday life.

**Transferring votes**
Both these parties also successfully transfer votes to each other, which may hold the key to the success of the alliance. At a recent press conference, BSP chief Mayawati said that past experience suggests that the SP and the BSP successfully transfer votes to each other. This happened in the 1993 Assembly election in U.P. and the alliance was successful in forming the government. In the byelections in Phulpur and Gorakhpur in March 2018, even without a formal alliance the BSP's votes got easily transferred to the SP. This suggests that there is not much work needed to create a chemistry between the two vote bases. The only thing that the alliance needs to do now is disseminate its message to the voters.

**Some similarities**
Besides these caste-based relationships and electoral calculations, there is also the question of ideology. Ram Manohar Lohia's ideology and B.R. Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram's ideology bear certain similarities. Both the leaders talked about *bhagidari*, or representation to social groups supporting a party in accordance with their strength. This was emphasised in Kanshi Ram's slogan: "*Jiski jitni sankhya bhari, uski utni hissedari.*"

Despite being archrivals otherwise, it is clear that the politics of the BSP and the SP have a lot in common. Many Lohiaites, such as Ramswaroop Verma, had worked hard to create Ambedkarite-Lohiaite unity in the State in the 1970s. So, there are trained cadres in the Lohiaite movement who may emerge as opinion-makers of this unity. This will help disseminate the message of this alliance at the grass-roots level.

**The Muslim vote**
The Muslims in the State will also view this alliance with some consideration. There is a sense of fear among Muslims given the strong opposition to cow slaughter in the State. Plus they are not adequately represented in politics. Muslims usually vote after assessing the winnability of non-BJP political parties. If many vote for the alliance (some will also vote for the Congress), that would ensure a big victory for the SP and the BSP. Muslims are an important group in the State as they constitute 20% of the population.

If the Congress emerges as a third bloc to make the contest triangular, it would benefit the alliance. If the Congress manages to obtain the votes of the upper castes and the urban middle class from the BJP, this too would help the SP-BSP alliance.

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**NO**

**SHANTANU GUPTA** is the author of 'The Monk who became Chief Minister', a biography of Yogi Adityanath

### An opportunistic alliance at the top will not easily percolate down to the cadres

Given that it is the most populous State in India, Uttar Pradesh is certainly a very important piece in the electoral puzzle of 2019. The much-talked-about mahagathbandhan, or alliance of non-BJP parties, to defeat the BJP is primarily based on the hyper narrative of the prospective success of the BSP-SP alliance in U.P. However, a deep dive into the electoral numbers and political equations makes this citadel look pretty vulnerable.

**Examining vote shares**
The SP-BSP combine is setting its hopes on the bypoll victories in Gorakhpur, Phulpur and Kairana in 2018. There are multiple flaws in this assumption. First, the unsuccessful seat-sharing arrangement in the Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan Assembly elections between the "arrogant" Congress, as BSP chief Mayawati put it, and the SP and the BSP has pushed the Congress out of the opportunistic mahagathbandhan in U.P. for 2019. With the Congress out of the equation, going by the 2014 Lok Sabha figures, the SP and the BSP, which had a combined vote share of 42.1% then, will have a lower vote share than the BJP and the Apna Dal, which had a vote share of 43.6% then. Even with the addition of the Rashtriya Lok Dal's vote share, the combined vote share of the BSP-SP-RLD combine (43%) will be lower than that of the BJP-Apna Dal combine.

Second, the bypoll victories came with a wafer-thin margin, with considerably lower voting percentages. In 2014, for example, Yogi Adityanath won the Gorakhpur seat with a margin of more than 3 lakh votes, but in the bypoll, SP candidate Praveen Kumar Nishad won by a margin of only 21,000 votes. Every parliamentary seat has around 2,000 polling booths and every booth has around 1,000 votes. A margin of 21,000 votes can be reversed just by improving the vote share in two or three dozen booths. Besides, bypolls never generate the political euphoria and engagement that a general election does, so there's a lower voter turnout. The 11 percentage point drop in voting in the Gorakhpur bypoll went against the BJP, which can easily be reversed.

**Cadre-level problems**
Third, these were just three bypolls where the BSP silently supported the SP and RLD candidates. A larger exercise of seat-sharing for the 80 seats in U.P. between the SP and the BSP and possibly the RLD will not be smooth, given the complex electoral arithmetic and clash of egos. This is the same BSP whose leader publicly declared to never do business with the SP after the infamous guest house attack on her by SP leaders in 1995. The BSP and SP field cadres have worked against each other for more than two decades. An opportunistic alliance at the top will not easily percolate to the cadre level. On whichever seat the SP loses the ticket to the BSP or vice-versa, the respective party cadres will be highly demoralised and the vote share of the two parties will simply not add up in all the seats. The BSP has a far more committed and loyal cadre than the SP. Ms. Mayawati will be able to transfer the BSP's votes to the SP's candidates. But in seats where BSP candidates will contest, it will not be easy for SP president Akhilesh Yadav to transfer the SP's votes to the BSP.

The only motive that this alliance has is to beat the BJP. Caste is its only trump card. But by promulgating an ordinance to reaffirm the SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and by providing 10% reservation to economically weaker members of the upper castes, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken even this away from these regional satraps.

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**IT'S COMPLICATED**

**SANDEEP SHASTRI** is a political scientist and the national coordinator of the Lokniti network

### Victory is not about arithmetic alone, but about chemistry between the allies and their voters

The BSP-SP alliance in U.P. for the general election this year has begun a debate on the wider political implications of this electoral agreement. Uttar Pradesh sends over a seventh of the members of the Lok Sabha and accounts for about one-fourth of the BJP MPs in the House. Any change in electoral equations in the State is bound to have an impact on the nature and structure of political competition in the country in general and the ruling BJP in particular.

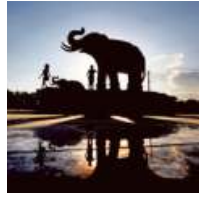On the face of it, this looks like a decidedly winning combination if we consider the electoral arithmetic. Yet, victories and defeats are not merely about simple arithmetic and the mechanical adding up of past trends in voting and extrapolating them to the future. It is also about political chemistry between the allies – between their leaders, their workers, and, more crucially, among their voters.

If one were to just bring together the votes secured by the SP and BSP in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls in U.P. as well as the Assembly elections of 2017, one notices that in terms of sheer numbers they could pose a formidable challenge to the BJP. In 2014, the SP and BSP together secured just 0.5% votes less than the BJP. In the Assembly elections of 2017, their combined vote tally was a good 9 percentage points ahead of the BJP. This by itself, and the results of the three byelections to the Lok Sabha from the State, must be giving the BJP sleepless nights as it had a 70-plus contingent in 2014 in the Lok Sabha from this State (it is less than 70 now).

**Ground-level issues**
Yet, two important factors need to be considered in this discussion.

First, it would be politically naïve to simply add up the SP-BSP votes in the past and assume that those numbers would hold for this election. Will this political chemistry work at the ground level? While SP president Akhilesh Yadav and BSP chief Mayawati have patched up and stitched an alliance, will this be logically carried forward by the local party units and leaders? Let's not forget that the SP and the BSP have been traditional rivals, and the Yadav-Dalit rivalry at the local level has been in some ways a key factor in State politics. A lot depends on the ability of both Mr. Yadav and Ms. Mayawati to persuade their local leaders to sink their differences and work in unison, at least in this election. Both parties are making no pretensions of a long-term alliance. Local leaders of both the SP and the BSP are probably mindful of this fact, even as they are encouraged to work together this time around.

**Voting patterns**
The ability of leaders and cadres to get voters loyal to the party to switch votes to the alliance partner in a seat that they are not contesting will be critical. Past experience has shown that the BSP has not faced a serious challenge in transferring votes to whoever it allied with. On the other hand, the allies of the BSP have found it difficult to convince their supporters to vote for the BSP. This explains why Ms. Mayawati has been so lukewarm to alliances in the past.

Finally, the continued split in the anti-BJP vote in the State will also have to be kept in mind. The Congress has announced its intention to contest all the seats. This will result in a split of the anti-BJP vote. Whether the Congress will reach a tacit or even an open understanding with the SP-BSP combine prior to the elections will be closely watched. This could decidedly tilt the balance in favour of the non-BJP alliance.

At this stage, it looks quite complicated.

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## SINGLE FILE

# Balancing act in Afghanistan

### India should be informed of the developments in the peace process for which the U.S. is taking Pakistan's help

**MICHAEL KUGELMAN**
AFP

In recent weeks, a new policy conundrum has emerged for the U.S. as it attempts to help launch a peace process in Afghanistan. Soon after the U.S. government formally requested Pakistan's assistance to bring the Taliban to the table, Islamabad helped facilitate meetings between senior Taliban representatives and U.S. officials in Abu Dhabi. The U.S. government appears to be acknowledging that Pakistan, given its influence over the Taliban, is an important and potentially helpful player in the peace process in Afghanistan.

However, it has also signalled its desire for India, its growing defence partner, to be more involved in reconciliation efforts and in Afghanistan more broadly. At various times during his term, President Donald Trump – sometimes crudely, as with his mocking comment about New Delhi limiting itself to building libraries in Afghanistan – has suggested that New Delhi step up its game. The recent visit to India of Zalmay Khalilzad (in photo), the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, highlights the importance that Washington accords to India in Afghanistan.

Herein lies the dilemma: the U.S. cannot have it both ways. If Pakistan is enlisted in reconciliation efforts, India won't be keen to get involved. But if India does take on a larger role, then Pakistan may well step back.

To be sure, India and Pakistan have proved to be willing and able to partner regionally. They may struggle to coexist in SAARC, but they do cooperate on the TAPI pipeline, and they're both members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, an arrangement mostly of Central Asian states, and China and Russia.

Of course, partnering in Afghanistan is much more delicate and challenging. Fortunately for the U.S., this policy dilemma may work itself out on its own. Despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi's desire for a more robust regional foreign policy, India appears content to keep a low profile in Afghanistan, outside of its continued development and economic assistance projects. Tellingly, New Delhi has distanced itself from the Indian Army Chief's remark supporting talks with the Taliban with no preconditions. Additionally, India will not volunteer to play a role in reconciliation efforts unless formally invited by Kabul. Afghan officials, grudgingly cognisant of Pakistan's significant role, are unlikely to do so unless current efforts to kick-start talks do not bear fruit, or Pakistan is no longer seen as helpful.

Still, it is important that India not be left on the outside looking in amid efforts to spark a reconciliation process with such major implications for it. Accordingly, the U.S. should keep India fully informed, at the highest levels, about any developments in reconciliation. U.S. officials owe that engagement to one of their most important partners in South Asia.

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THE FIVE-YEAR CHALLENGE
2014 — ACHHE DIN
2019 — DIN TO POLLS

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## DATA POINT

### Where the filth flows

A government-commissioned independent study of 97 towns along the Ganga shows that 39% of these towns in five States are in need of overall improvement in cleanliness, solid waste management and a change in how nullahs (drains) are handled. The study was conducted over six weeks in November-December 2018. By Varun B. Krishnan

**How they fared |** Over half the towns in Bihar and West Bengal where the Ganga flows were given the C grade*, which means they require overall improvement

GRADE A ▪ GRADE B ▪ GRADE C

(Bar chart: Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Average — Percentage 0 to 100)

**Population matters |** Only three towns with a population of more than a lakh each were graded A. Most of the towns which received the A grade had a low population

| Population | Grade A | Grade B | Grade C |
|---|---|---|---|
| <1 lakh | 9 | 26 | 12 |
| 1-4 lakh | 2 | 16 | 19 |
| >4 lakh | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| Total | 12 | 44 | 36 |

▪ No. of towns ranked in each State — West Bengal: 39, Uttar Pradesh: 20, Bihar: 17, Uttarakhand: 14, Jharkhand: 2

▪ Only 92 towns were considered as data could not be obtained for five towns

**River dumps |** It is common for nullahs to drain into the Ganga across towns in all the States. In Bihar, the towns had dumpsites along the river as well

TOWNS WITH: ▪ SOLID WASTE FLOATING ON THE SURFACE ● DUMPSITES ALONG GHATS ▲ NULLAH DISCHARGING INTO THE RIVER

(Chart: Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal — Percentage 0 to 100)

**Low fund utilisation |** An analysis of funds allocated for the Ganga-cleaning mission shows that in 2017-18, only half the budgeted amount was released/spent

FINAL BUDGET ALLOCATION — % OF BUDGET RELEASED/UTILISED

(Chart: ₹crore 0 to 4000; 2014-15, 2016-17, 2018-19; Percentage 0 to 80)

Data as on 30.7.2018

*Grades: A - Clean ghats, good solid waste management (SWM); B - Partially clean, needs better SWM; C - Needs overall improvement

Source: Third party inspection of 97 Ganga towns' report by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs; Rajya Sabha Q&A

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**FIFTY YEARS AGO** JANUARY 18, 1969

### 'India on verge of economic take-off'

Mr. Chester Bowles, American Ambassador, said here [New Delhi] to-day [January 17] that India was on the verge of an economic take-off. Addressing a large gathering of Indo-American business community, on the occasion of the inauguration of the North India Council of the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Bowles said his optimism about India's economic prosperity was based on the agriculture breakthrough, the recent spurt in exports and the brightening of aid prospects. Noting that he had earlier forecast self-sufficiency in foodgrains in India by 1974, he said it appeared the country would achieve self-sufficiency by 1972 itself - two years in advance. The Ambassador said he was hopeful India would achieve the target of seven per cent growth in exports so that the gap between imports and exports which was of the order of $100 million last year would be wiped out.

**A HUNDRED YEARS AGO** JANUARY 18, 1919

### Education to Soldiers.
(From an Editorial)

A New scheme of Education for the Army has, according to the London Times, been established under Colonel Lord Gorell. The object of the scheme is mainly the education of the young soldier. The great majority of these young soldiers joined the service at about the age of 14. The young men who joined the Army four years ago are referred to, and it is asked what part these young men who have rapidly developed from the stage of adolescence to that of mature manhood by their experience during the war will place in the future of their country? In most cases these young soldiers look upon the affairs of their motherland in a detached way and with no sense of their responsibilities as citizens of the Empire. The education, therefore, that it is proposed to give them is "to help them to realize themselves and all their capacities and powers, and to show them their relation to the community as a whole and the part they should play in it."

## CONCEPTUAL

### Vacancy chain
SOCIOLOGY

This refers to any social arrangement that determines the use of scarce resources among a population. When a resource enters a vacancy chain, it is first allocated to a certain member of the population. After its use by the first member, the resource is then allocated to the next member in the hierarchy and so on. This phenomenon has been observed across organisms ranging from human beings to hermit crabs. Jobs in governments and companies, for instance, become available to other members of a population when an employee retires from his position. The idea of vacancy chains was proposed by American sociologist Harrison C. White in his 1970 book *Chains of Opportunity*.

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